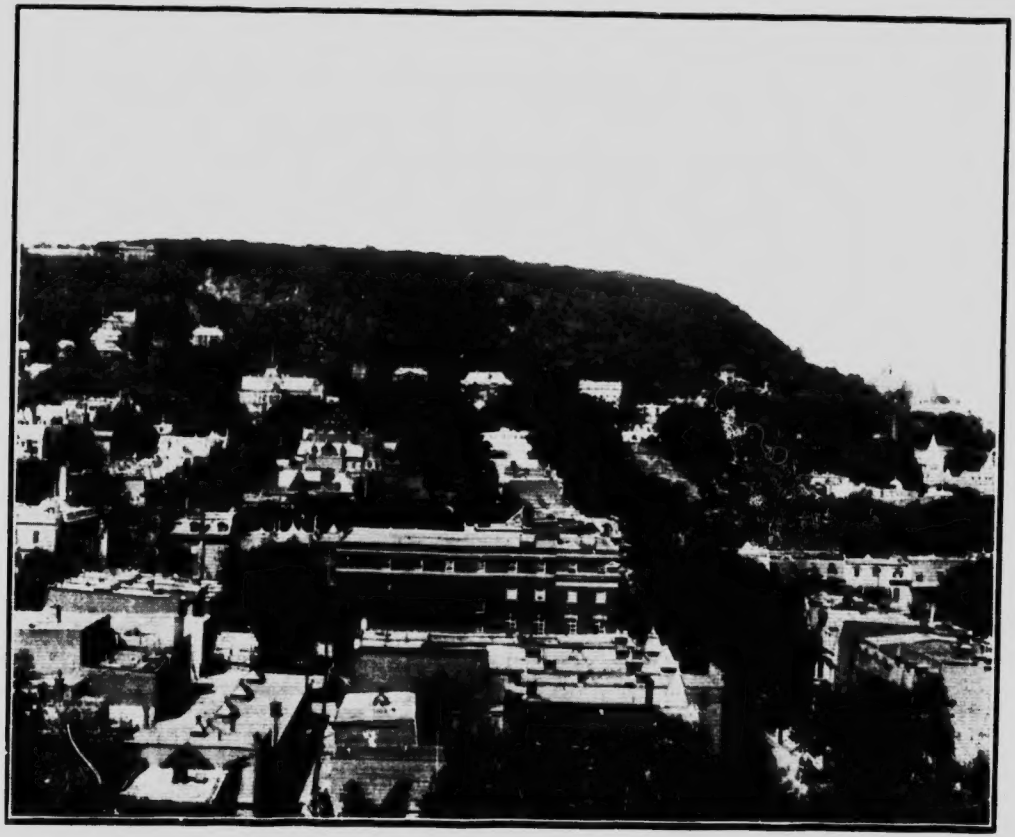

Mount Royal from the South.

Idylls of Our Island

BY

MYRTLE J. BOA

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PREFACE

THE few views and descriptions presented in the following pages do not by any means attempt to cover the many beautiful buildings and charming scenery which our City and Island afford.

Especially interesting is the trip down the foaming Rapids at Lachine. Passing the Indian village of Caughnawagna with its quaint houses, and the Canadian Pacific Railway bridge, the trusty steamer guides us through the dangerous, white-capped reach of Rapids, and rippling waters of the broad St. Lawrence until we come in sight of the city. Toward twilight of a cloudy day Montreal, with its towers and lofty spires, and the long stretch of mountain veiled in pale grey mist, appears like a phantom city beyond the dark silhouette of Nun's Islands' wooded strip.

The bird's-eye view of Montreal from the look-out on Mount Royal is very beautiful. The city stretches below with its spires and domes gilded in the sun, and

beyond its bounds the broad belt of the St. Lawrence shows silvery blue, spanned by Victoria Jubilee Bridge, with St. Helen's Isle showing softly green in its midst like an emerald gem, and in the distance the shadowy heights of Mount Bruno, Beloeil and Rougemont may be seen, and further back the top of Mount Johnson, sometimes called the Sugar Loaf on account of its peculiar shape.

Very cool and delightful are the wide and spacious parks, chief among which are Mount Royal Park, Parc Lafontaine and St. Helen's Island, the latter named for Helene de Bouilli, the wife of Champlain; and the many statues and monuments on the carefully tended squares commemorate different historical events.

The various types of architecture expressed in the many churches are very beautiful, for which Montreal has been truly called "The City of Churches."

M. J. B.

MONTREAL.

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Mount Royal

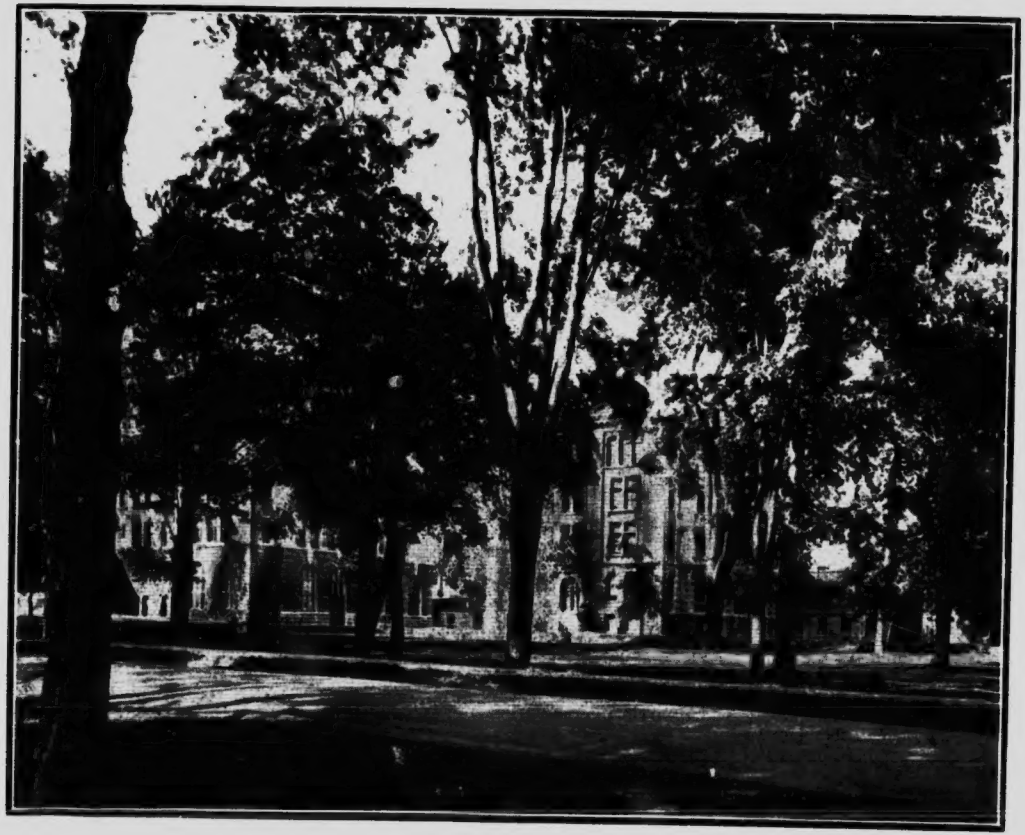
MOUNT ROYAL rises in still majesty
Above our island.

On her heights
The clustered trees show light and shade
Of greenness, when the Sun
From the deep azure canopy smiles down
On the sweet scene his radiance creates.

Beneath, where dwellings stand in stately rows,
The trees look up and on their quivering tips
Catch silver largess from the bounteous Sun.

And where our highland forms against the sky
Uneven line, a misty purity,
Like the sheer stuff of which bride's veils are made,
Softens the contrast 'twixt the green and blue.

We love our mountain, we who dwell
Beneath her shelter, beautiful she stands,
Like some fair guardian of our City dear.



McGill University

BEYOND the buildings, marble white
Beneath the golden glory of the sun,
About whose base the exquisite ivy clings,
The mountain steep uplifts her stately height
Pine-fringed against the sky.

Before,
The velvet hollows, and the campus broad,
Studded with lofty trees whose spreading boughs
With interlacing foliage o'erarch
And shade the winding walks.

Upon the campus in majestic strength
The old elm stands, the rugged founder tree.

Brown mossy fruited butternuts
And stalwart oaks with the old elm survive
The early days ere the first building rose
A rich memorial of James McGill.

And in these halls the intellect is trained
To use its native richness, blossoming
In lives of honor and of usefulness.

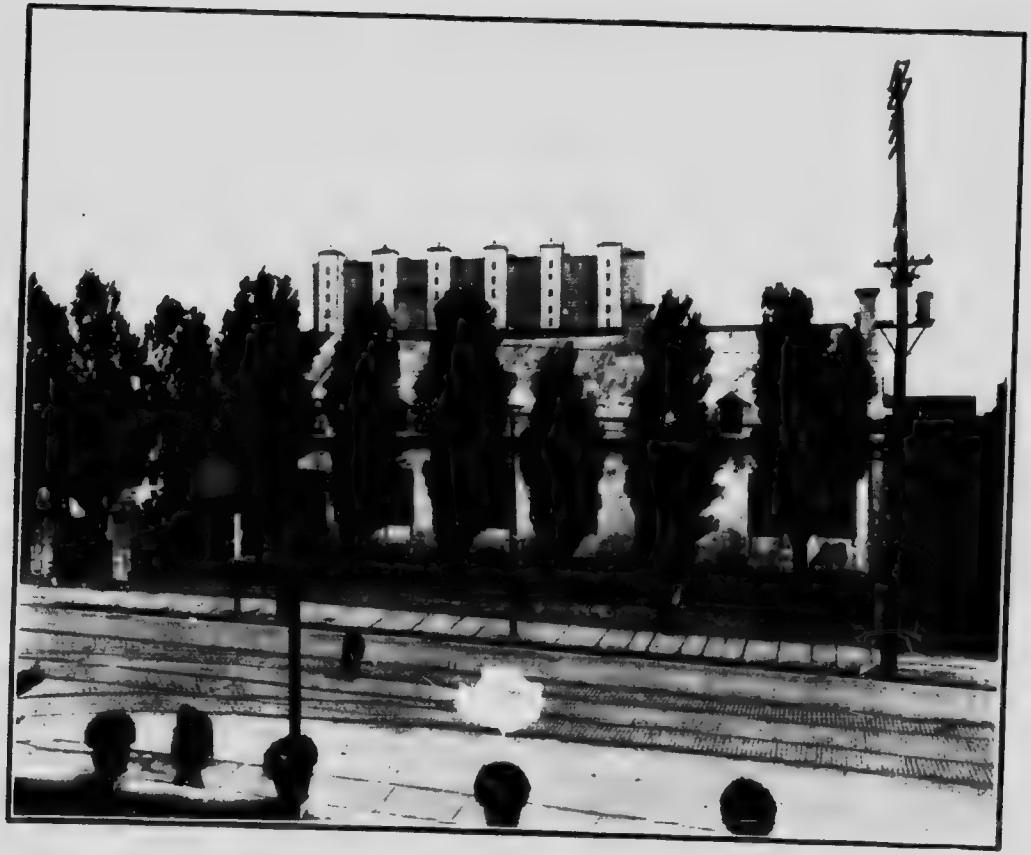
Christ Church Cathedral

TO the soft beauty of the arching sky
Where filmy clouds float in the sunlit deeps
The great grey Gothic edifice uplifts
Its lofty spire.

Below,
The rich rose window circles, and beneath
Its carven beauty triple-canopied
The portal leads unto the pillared aisle,
Whose every arch in matchless symmetry
Curves like a leaf-top, and the sun's soft gold
Sifts thro' the rich stained casements in a glow
Of mellow light.

As though
Newly alighted from the courts above
Like Irises, sweet messengers of heaven,
The winged angels with their spotless scrolls
From inner walls incline.

And in a swell of richest harmony
The sweet-voiced organ breathes a hymn of praise
Unto our heavenly King.



Chateau de Ramezay

SERENE amid the City's din
The ancient Chateau stands.

Tall poplar trees
From Lombardy o'ershade the velvet lawn,
And tiny floral blooms of purple shade
Lift their shy faces from the circled plot.

Within,
The deep-arched doorway opens from the hall
Into the Elgin Gallery, where hang
Portraits of heroes and of noble men.

The Montreal and the de Vaudrieul Rooms,
The Council Chamber and the French Salon
And the quaint kitchen hold the souvenirs
The passing years deposit in their wake:
While a railed stairway leads unto the coo
And silent vaults below.

What a strange silence broods about these halls,
As though the veilëd spirit of the past
Still lingered like the echo of a dream.

The Westmount Fete

THE dim hushed evening draws her dusky veil
Across the silent sky.
About
The velvet smoothness of the shadowy park
Where the soft fragrance laden zephyrs sway
The foliage of richly leavëd trees
The pointed tents are staked, and thro' the flaps
Half-opened may be glimpsed
The rainbow hues of divers merchandise.
A thousand lanterns lend their magic light
Changing the staid park into fairyland,
And where the fountain sprays in silvery shower
The Liliputian lake is shot across
Its quivering surface where the shadows glance
With spiral jets of red and yellow flame
Reflected from the colored globes above.
And where the hollow dips a narrow stream
Spanned by the rustic bridge's curving arch
Mirrors the leafy overhanging boughs
Within its shallow depth.
The stirring strains of martial music break
Upon the night, keeping the thoughts of all
Amid the merry-making throng in touch
With the true purpose of their gathering.

Notre Dame Church

ABOVE the Church of Notre Dame
Deep-throated bells in the twin towers
Of Temperance and Perseverance hang,
Ready to sound their solemn call to prayer
Over the City.
Within,
In shadowy pew amid the solemn hush
The fretted people kneel,
And from each niche and by the winding stair
Saints with their pure and holy faces bend
In tender pity o'er the worshippers,
As though from their high heights they understood
The thorn-strewn path we mortals tread below.
Above,
The vaulted spaces blue as evening skies
Are strewn with silver stars and fleur-de- lis,
And the warm sun, sweet smiling thro' the grey
Rich-patterned casements, sheds a quiet glow
Like a soft benediction o'er the scene.
Beyond,
With paintings rare and beautiful
As some fair dream, exquisitely designed,
Lies the hushed Chapel of the Sacred Heart.

How like a lovely symbol of the soul
This rich-interiored temple seems to be,
As though Man sought in carvëd wood and stone
An outer semblance of his inner thoughts
Of holiness and praise.

The Art Gallery

LIKE some chaste pile of Grecian marble stands
The Gallery, where meet to charm the eye
The lovely semblances of the rich thoughts
The Muses gift to Man.

Wide steps of stone
Lead to the entrance where in beauty rise
Ionic columns, and on either side
O'er the plain casements classic myths portray
In carven purity the outward form
Of virtues by Hellenic minds conceived.

And on each side
Of the broad stairway rising from the hall
Rich crimson curtains hang, beyond whose folds
Among the palms the sculptured statues stand
In beautiful repose.

The stairway leads
To upper galleries where paintings rare
By Master minds conceived hang on the walls,
Gems of surpassing loveliness and grace.

Westmount Park

IN one of Westmount's quiet parks
Red flowers sway with the soft-breathing breeze
A crimson flame of beauty.

And the sun
A molten ball of gold cuts through
The coolness of the turquoise sky
Which richly flecked with ermine hangs o'erhead.

Green in the background lies the close-clipt lawn
And richly leavëd trees that gently stir
In the cool breeze.

Red flowers! Your beauty flames upon the sense,
And cool aristocratic turquoise sky,
You calm the mood to a more thoughtful bent.

A lovely scene, a very morning prayer,
A psalm of praise, that all too soon recedes
On the rapt gaze for scenes of duller hue.

St. James Cathedral

ABOVE the pillared edifice of stone
The twelve apostles stand, their noble forms
Clearly defined against th' ethereal blue
And ermine trimmëd sky.

The entrances like gateways into peace
Lead to the dim aisle and the altars lit
With the pale light as of departed souls
Returned to illumine faltering steps to heaven.

The shadowed paintings of a by-gone day
Hang on the walls, recalling early times
Ere the Red man had made his exodus
And the white man assumed the reins of power.

In the vast space of richly carvëd vaults
The half-hushed sound of foot-falls echo soft
Upon the list'ning ear.

But deeper still, a sense of reverence
Falls on the soul, as though the atmosphere
Was filled with prayer, loosed from the heart
Of many a worshipper.

Royal Victoria Hospital

UPON Mount Royal's southern slope
Where breezes sweep among the pines
The hospital like some Scotch castle stands
Upon its highland base.

O'er the main entrance to the central block
Appear the monograms engraved in stone
Of Lord Mount Stephen and Sir Donald Smith.*

The Gaelic motto "Lippen" to attend,
And "Perseverance" on the coats-of-arms
On the twin gables form the watchwords twain
That influence the healers of the sick.

And where the smooth
Green terraces incline the driveway forms
A mighty horse-shoe in its curving track.

A marble statue of Victoria
Immortal in her people's memory,
Graces the quiet hall and seems to shed
The sweetness of her gentle life about
The sun-lit wards and stately corridors,
Where white-capped nurses bend above the cots
In ministration to each sufferer.

* Lord Strathcona

The Fraser Library

THE building standing in its quiet strength
Suggests the simple binding of a book,
(Thus fancy speaks) whose rich interior
Holds magic keys that open doors to thought.

The varied volumes on the well-filled shelves
Unlock new vistas of the mental world.
The thoughts of men enregistered upon
The printed page throughout the ages stir
To sudden music silent chords that sleep
Within the soul, and the bright glow
Of spirit radiance that in us dwells
Illuminates each thought and gives to dreams
And deeds heroic of the past new life.

And statues grace the hushed and quiet rooms,
Of men whose useful lives long since were spent,
Bearing undying in their moulded forms
The noble traces of the spirit's fire.

The Rapids at Bordeaux

SMOOTHLY the Prairie River flows
Between high banks with vernal foliage fringed,
Gliding sun-glinted on its onward way,
Till where the rapids reached its currents break
In foaming waves upon the jagged rocks.

Down these wild waters in a bark canoe
By Indians manned three centuries ago
Came Father Viel, the priest of Recollect,
Ahuntsic too, his red-skinned neophyte,
And met their death among the angry waves,
By Indian guides their confidence betrayed.

The pier long-jutting parts the turbid sault
From the calm waters of the tranquil bay
That mirrors in its depths the azure skies
And filmy clouds o'erhead, and by the brink
Where silvery gleams glance on the emerald leaf
The stooping trees can see themselves below.

Below,
Smoothly the Prairie River flows,
Between high banks with vernal foliage fringed,
Lapping upon the quiet shores with soft,
Insistent sound.